Introduction to the National Board for professional teaching standards

Reflections on the National Board experience

The national boards experience gave me a chance to reflect on my current teaching practices and analyze where I started, how I have progressed in the past 5 years of teaching, where I am currently academically and professionally, and analysis of future possibilities in my career. I took on this challenge with the point of being myself to get a true measure of my skills as a teacher. In the first few months I started getting more up to date on education policy, while collecting and compiling artifacts for the 4th entry: accomplishments. I journaled weekly on the education articles and materials I was researching on the Wiki blog which further impacted my learning. During this time I also started videotaping my classes, which proved to be an invaluable assessment tool for students and myself. I then finalized my video for entry 3, demonstrating musicianship, by filming a rehearsal close to the winter concert where my students were able to learn about a more advanced musical concept, phrasing. During this lesson, which was broken up into many different sections: warm-up, rhythmic drills, micro-rehearsal of problematic sections in 3 different pieces of music, and finally application of musical phrasing, I demonstrated on the final andante section of one of the concert pieces on my trumpet. I also performed on trombone earlier in the film. This video, and the first few I made gave me a realization on how I was doing things, what I was saying, what nonverbal strategies I was doing, and how my students were reacting to my execution of my lesson. Analysis of these videos contributed greatly to future planning, such as how I structured segments of my lesson, pacing issues, length of instruction segments, how much is too much when planning instruction, and how I was executing my instructional strategies. After viewing many of the videos I began to acquire a greater sense of what I was doing and why at that moment in the classroom, and be able to adjust and adapt.

While writing each entry, I went usually 15 pages over the maximum amount, which was a lot of editing. The revision process gave me the opportunity to delete only but the most important details when analyzing and describing my teaching practices, which in turn allowed me to connect that concept with my daily teaching. I ask myself what are the most important details of my lesson, and try to stick to those main concepts in literally everything I do starting with walking into the room 1st period. Writing, revising, videotaping, attending graduate class, journal writing, these were a lot of things to handle at once. On top of that, I was and still am performing almost every night in various bands in the Chicago area. This has put an immense strain on every aspect of my life. I have the outlook and motivation to work hard at whatever endeavor I choose to pursue, and in this instance it was national boards and furthering my education. Finishing the national boards has taught me to constantly analyze, develop, and adapt my teaching and curriculum, looking closely at classroom observations of myself to improve my effectiveness. I am confident in my ability to do that effectively, now that I have completed my portfolio, and look forward to involving myself with action research on a regular basis.

Grade: A

Curriculum and Instruction I: Theories, foundations, and contexts

My main evaluation and reflection of my work in this category involves my national board portfolio work, mainly entry 1: planning instruction, and entry 2: delivering instruction. In these 2 entries I clearly analyzed and developed my curriculum and instruction through the portfolio work I submitted. Curriculum research I conducted was mainly outside of class focusing on my content area, instrumental music. I combined curriculum frameworks from multiple literature sources highly recommended by the top professionals in the field of music education. I took those ideas and combined them with my own to create an entire instrumental music curriculum for my classes, which I demonstrated in my portfolio writings. Developing a curriculum that suited my specific students and school was probably the hardest part of the portfolio process. Finding curriculum maps that worked broadly was not a problem, but rather adapting and evolving a curriculum suited to the inner city environment that I was currently teaching in was the largest challenge. I am currently beginning to construct complex curriculum maps in the computer software program Rubicon, which many of the other departments at my school have been required to complete this year. I believe this online network of curriculum mapping will be the new dawn of curriculum and instruction theory. I also took the next step in the implementation of instructional technology into my classroom this year, with a small net book pc used to digitally record my student’s performances and play examples of music. I’m looking forward to future implementation of other instructional technology as my access to these tools increases.

Grade: A

Action Research I: purposes, assumptions, and practice

\*Refer to the national boards section of this paper.

Grade: A

Group Theory and classroom applications

Through group work this semester I learned a lot from watching other teacher’s videos. Although these videos did not necessarily directly connect with my content area, they proved useful in identifying instructional practices from a third person perspective, seeing general strategies being implemented, and created a discussion of analysis by the class that was engaging and made me think more deeply about what was going on in the various classrooms. I also greatly benefited from the discussions and debates in class regarding the required readings of various articles on education and the Diane Ravitch chapters. Delving deeply into education politics and theory, I was able to create a greater understanding of how policy functions in the education world. I came to a distinct conclusion about deeper cultural and class barriers that impact education in America in a larger way than I ever thought before. Teaching at a neighborhood school gave me the advantage of seeing firsthand how a school deals with many of the core problems being focused on in today’s media and politics. I became much more empowered to seek out answers to core issues leading to the collapse of our educational system, experiencing them at my school and reading about them in all the articles and websites analyzed in this course. These discussions of group theory effected the way I teach on a daily basis by taking in the larger scope of what’s working and what’s not in my school in comparison and contrast to other schools across the nation. I thoroughly contributed to every class discussion and completed all the readings on time to receive the greatest understanding of the material. My learning was impacted further through debate and discussion. My insights and contributions to group discussions stimulated other students in developing their own ideas and philosophies concerning theory and classroom applications.

Grade: A